

# OPINION

## Final price of Vietnam still to be paid

by seamus brennan

opinion editor

Our nation's grief, tight bitterness, was such that no towering memorial could be built to honor this war's dead, though none could deny the men's courage or worthiness. Instead, low on the horizon, cut into the side of a quiet, grassy knoll is a wall, long, set with black marble, burdened with the names of more than 55,000 lost men.

The wall's angles form an open, natural amphitheater in the cool, green Washington park and in this peaceful setting an everchanging and endless cast of Americans quietly recite the last lines from a modern American tragedy off the stone-somber wall; the names of U.S. servicemen lost in the waste of Vietnam.

Ask a visitor to the Vietnam Memorial, ask a neighbor, a friend, ask yourself: What value should this country place, what would it be worth to this nation, to remove one man's name from that long list...what price for ten...fifty...one-hundred men to rise, Lazarus-like, from their graves and return to their homes and families?

Would four-billion dollars seem too great a price for this country to pay?

The evidence is overwhelming, there are names on that memorial wall which do not honor dead men, but marks those individuals abandonment by the American

government, perhaps by the American people (time will tell).

American POW/MIA's are still held captive in Southeast Asia. The government knows this, it knows the cost of bringing those men home, it does not want you to know.

P.O.W.'s in exchange for a payment of four-billion dollars. (This was less than the sum Nixon and Kissinger had promised the Vietnamese at the Paris talks as post-war rebuilding aid, which was subsequently denied by a vindictive Congress.) The

ransom for hostage soldiers, the lives and safety of all our forces, worldwide, would be placed in further jeopardy. Paying high prices for the return of U.S. personnel makes them a valuable commodity which other unfriendly nations would

in the future of Vietnam as we had in Germany or Japan, or is it that we can only be magnanimous in victory, that in defeat we retreat to the vengeful stature of small children?

The major obstacle in obtaining the release of American POW/MIA's appears to be the government's refusal to honor the commitment it made to Vietnam in 1973 to help rebuild their country.

Somehow, the logic of this eludes me. The Marshall Plan, which involved the total reconstruction of Germany after WW II, has proven to be one of the most successful and sound foreign policy decisions in this nation's history. Neither did we deny Japan much needed aid at the close of the war. The idea developed then; that a people free from economic want and starvation would not turn to Communism, is just as valid today.

Vietnam will not disappear. At some point, given the limited and circular nature of this planet, we will have to deal with that country again. The positive example of the United States helping a former enemy, working to rebuild a society we destroyed, will not be seen as a weakness, but will attest to our strength and national maturity.

Over the course of the conflict, the United States spent over 150 billion dollars on the destruction of Vietnam, perhaps it's time we spent something to rebuild that country.



In 1986, Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz admitted that there had been over 800 reported sightings of Americans still in captivity in Vietnam, more than 100 of these eyewitness sightings were characterized as being beyond the pale of doubt.

On August 19, 1986, *The Wall Street Journal* reported a proposal which was discussed at a general meeting on security matters in the early weeks of the Reagan administration, 1981. An offer was made by the government of Vietnam to release an unspecified number of live, American

Vietnamese offer was judged to be genuine by William Casey, then director of the CIA, and Richard Allen, acting as national security advisor.

A number of the President's aides argued against paying the money on the grounds that it would appear the U.S. would be paying ransom. The council feared a loss of morale among our forces if it was learned that American servicemen had been abandoned in 1973. President Reagan concurred with that opinion. The offer was dropped.

There is some sense in the government's position. If it appears we are paying

be eager to exploit, however, in this case, there is a major flaw in the governments reasoning.

During the Vietnam conflict the United States dropped more than 7 million tons of bombs on Indochina. That is equal to more than three hundred of the atomic bombs which fell on Japan in 1945, it is eighty times the amount of bombs dropped on Britain in World War II. Vietnam, north and south, was devastated by the war, it will be a long time before the majority of it will, if ever, be fit for agriculture or any self-sustaining industry. Do we not have as large a stake

involving student services, the library and budget are left to the Board of Regents and we, as students, sit on seats as representatives."

This is not correct. Students do not have direct representation on the Board of Regents.

There are two committees

with student voices, Academic Affairs and Legislative Liaison. The students cannot make or second motions or vote.

Popp said, "We have senators who serve the seats of other colleges but are not direct representatives."

This is not correct. Each

is CSUNs 21 senators are checked semesterly for their major and college enrollment.

Popp said, "There are CSUN duties performed by people who do not know what they are doing, yet they are on the payroll."

This is not correct. As

intramurals director, if Mike has proof to the contrary he should bring his accusation to the Executive Board for investigation.

Thank you

Steve Evenson  
CSUN Senate President

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## Letters

### Dear Editor

I am compelled to answer several quotes made by intramural director Mike Popp that were published in Tuesdays edition.

Popp said, "Issues in